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THE BUILDING PRINCIPAL IN THE SURVEYS

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“As is the principal, so is the school,” wrote Chancellor Elliott in the report of the New York school survey. The principal is near enough to the actual teaching to control detailed procedure, to adapt it to the special needs of his district, and to keep the work on a high plane of efficiency. Unlike the teachers who have to do only with special grades or subjects, he is responsible for a large general program of education covering many grades and subjects. The principal is therefore in a position to wield a tremendous influence in the conduct of a school system. If he is active and efficient, the work of a building will be of a high character; if he is passive, inefficient, or a mere “odd-job man” around the premises, then the work becomes but stagnation or confusion.

This strategic position of the principal, however, is scarcely recognized in the survey reports. In many or even most reports such topics as janitors, fire escapes, supplies, toilet-rooms, blackboards, etc., receive more extended treatment than the functions, qualifications, and relations of the building principal.

There are certain exceptions to this general neglect in the survey reports from which the recommendations contained in this article are taken. But even in the reports that have handled the topic most adequately the treatment is usually but brief and general. Only in certain regions of the wide field of his responsibilities do they specify detailed functions or qualifications or relationships. Our profession has a large assortment of standards to apply in the judgment of buildings, or business management, or the work of the teacher in the

classroom; but it seems that we have relatively few clarified ideas as to the nature and place of the principal's work within the system. The survey reports are comparatively full where such accepted standards are numerous; they are brief where standards are lacking. The dearth of treatment is symptomatic of a dearth of accepted ideas as to the specific things of a professional character that the principal should do.

There is evident need, therefore, of a development of the theory relative to the principal's functions. One task involved in such labors is the assembling of the ideas of expert educational specialists. Of these the survey specialists constitute one class. Their conclusions have been developed, too, under favorable circumstances. On the one hand, they were, as they made the surveys, in intimate contact with practical situations, and involved in the practical labors of modifying those situations for the better. On the other hand, since their ideas were to result in something other than mere discussion, since they were to commit themselves before the entire profession, and since, therefore, their professional future was dependent upon their presenting the right ideas, they were urgently impelled to the most complete and accurate formulation possible of their ideas. It is possible, therefore, that no portion of our professional literature relative to the principal has been more carefully written than the little found in our survey reports. Our purpose here is to assemble the central ideas of the surveyors as to the functions, qualifications, and relations of the building principal.

The functions and relations of the principal as these are revealed in the survey reports can be grouped into certain general classes as follows:

I. DIRECTION OF THE WORK

The principal will give directions to teachers as to the work they are to do. In doing this the principal is not to be a mere

agent of communication transmitting the orders of the superintendent to the teachers. The entire body of principals of a city is expected to bear the same general burden of educational responsibility that is borne by the superintendent. He formulates this responsibility in general terms and then delegates it to the body of principals for reduction to further details. Each principal is expected to reduce it to forms that meet the specific needs of the pupils of his district. Upon this all survey reports are agreed:

"The principal should be the real, not merely the nominal, head of his school" (McMurry, New York: 356).

Principals bear responsibility for thought and initiative in the development of the work of their schools and of the school system as a whole (Cubberley, Portland: 31).

Principals should be permitted large initiative as to the work within their buildings (Cubberley, Salt Lake City: 44-46).

Principals and teachers "should take the initiative in making the curriculum in all subjects for their school" (McMurry, New York: 356).

"The principal will take the recommendations of the superintendent as to courses of study; and, within the limits there defined, will work out the details of the course for himself so as to fit his special problems" (San Antonio: 182).

"The authority of the [high-school] principal should be final on many things which concern the faculty, the curricula in the school, the professional spirit of the teachers, and the school's community relationships" (San Francisco: 282).

"They should be given larger authority and larger liberty in the management of their schools than they now possess" (special reference to Portland, Cubberley, Portland: 38).

"Assuming that capable leaders have been selected as principals, with broad but clearly defined limits of discretion, responsibility, and authority, the board of education should keep its hands off, and leave the principals free within these limits to work out the problems of the schools" (San Francisco: 282).

One thing to be provided the teachers by the principal is "big, forceful, unshackled leadership with freedom and vision" (San Francisco: 282).

Having this responsibility, the principal will then direct the details of the work in his building.

While the principal must direct the building routine, his primary function is to direct and supervise instruction (McMurry, New York: 334).

The principal is to see that the training given by the teachers of special grades and subjects is balanced, proportioned, and co-ordinated as dictated by the needs of the pupils (San Antonio: 135).

But the principal will not direct arbitrarily any more than the superintendent. He will assume that his major burden of educational responsibility is to be delegated to his teachers. He is to formulate it in terms that are relatively general as compared with the detailed workings of the several classrooms. He must expect the teachers then to take over the responsibility in the relatively general form in which he passes it on to them and to reduce it to specifics. This demands thought and initiative on their part. The task is really a co-operative one, the principal acting as leader of the professional group.

Supervisors will secure the full co-operation of teachers in the development of educational plans and policies (Strayer, Butte: 98).

In teachers' meetings the principal should utilize to the full the ideas of teachers (McMurry, New York: 338).

"The principal's worth is to be judged primarily by his skill as a leader, as a teacher of teachers" (McMurry, New York: 335).

The principal should permit a large degree of initiative to teachers in adjusting the work to the needs of their particular classes (Van Sickle, Salt Lake City: 75).

II. TRAINING TEACHERS IN SERVICE

This is merely indirect or long-range direction of the work. The principal is to see that the teachers so far as possible are prepared for self-direction and thus require only a minimum of

detailed directions from the principal. In either case the ultimate directing influence is the impersonal educational science. The principal may be the interpreter of this science and, standing at the teacher's elbow, may spend his time in giving it over to her in the form of detailed directions. But, on the other hand, he may train her to read and interpret this impersonal science independently and thus receive her daily directions without a personal intermediary. The surveys are agreed that this preparation of the teachers for self-direction is a fundamental task of the principal.

"It is the chief business of the supervisory corps in any school system to continue the training which teachers may have had in preparation for the work" (Strayer, Butte: 97).

Four great functions of the principal are: To develop the teachers' insight as to purposes; to assist them to right organization of materials and methods; to instil in teachers a sense of relative values; and finally to develop in teachers powers of independent initiative and self-help (McMurry, New York: 334).

The principals should direct the reading and study of two or three books each year by groups of their teachers (Cubberley, Portland: 37).

The principal should employ teachers' meetings for genuine vitalizing training of teachers (Cubberley, Portland: 39).

The principal will in large measure utilize the daily work of the teachers as a basis of the training in service. He does this by assisting the teacher to see the educational principles involved in her daily labors. Naturally he must himself see them before he can do this.

"It is one of the chief duties of the principals to make teachers better by watchful supervision and helpful criticism" (Judd, Cleveland: 49).

"The supervision on the part of the principal that will strengthen the weak places in a teacher's work is the best possible training for that teacher" (San Antonio: 219).

The principal should give special supervisory attention to all new teachers for a year or two after appointment (Cubberley, Portland: 54).

III. INSPECTION

As the principal directs, antecedent to the performance of the work, and as he prepares for and stimulates self-direction on the part of teachers, the foundation of all of the work is laid. But in the present stage of the development of educational science it is often a rather insecure foundation. The teacher misunderstands directions, or misinterprets the science, or lacks the facilities for the work; or even the principal's interpretation and direction may be fragmentary or erroneous. With a perfect science and perfect direction, results could be predetermined in the plans and direction. Supervisory inspection of procedure and results would scarcely be necessary. But under present conditions nothing of the sort is possible. The principal must keep a continual oversight over both processes and results. He must first see that the processes at all times at least appear to be in obedience to the educational science. He must detect any divergencies from the dictates of the science and in such cases see that the work is made to conform. So long as the work appears to be proceeding according to intentions, the principal will leave it to the teacher's self-direction. But he will quickly note any apparent weaknesses in the procedure. And he will bring the teachers to see clearly both the weaknesses and the nature of the educational science which is dictating something better. Thus neither in pointing out the weakness nor in showing the remedy will he employ arbitrary methods. His task is to turn the light of educational science upon the situation and to bring the teacher to see everything in this light.

A principal should secure the confidence of his teachers by pointing out to them the ways in which their work is justified by general impersonal educational principles; and in the light of the same principles the ways in which their work falls short (Strayer, Butte: 98).

The principal will explain both weaknesses and remedial measures in terms of impersonal educational aims and principles (McMurry, New York: 350).

But even this is not enough. The science is often too uncertain. Processes may appear to promise everything desired and yet fall short in actual achievement of results. And it is results that the schools are after. The principal must therefore look beyond the promises of procedure to achieved results. He must ascertain these as accurately as practicable to see if they measure up to standard. And for this purpose must have standards, modes of measurement of the results, and methods of comparing results with standard expectations. And then he must actually set up his standards and measure and compare. Only thus can he know the degree in which his intentions result in actualities. And he will bring the teachers to as full realization of the situation as possible.

"It is recommended that supervision of the individual schools be based in large measure on such objective comparisons as can be made through [standard] tests" (Judd, St. Louis: 212).

Principals should measure classroom results by means of standard tests. This should be made "a permanent part of the regular routine of supervision" (Gray, St. Louis: 184-86).

The principal will periodically measure or direct the measurement of the achievements of the pupils in his school. So far as possible he will use standard efficiency tests instead of examinations (Strayer, Butte: 99).

The principal will use the results of standard tests in pointing out the strengths and weaknesses of particular teachers (Strayer, Butte: 100).

For work in connection with standard tests "it is recommended that the principals be given clerical assistance to the extent of an hour a day" (Judd, St. Louis: 212).

The principal should make statistical and graphical studies of promotions and failures and seek explanations and devise remedies in consultation with teachers (implied, Judd, Grand Rapids: 36-60).

Closely related to this current inspection, the inspectorial function of rating the efficiency of teachers is in the province of principals. Although a generally accepted function, it receives little recognition in the survey reports.

"The determination of the fitness or unfitness of teachers for continuance and promotion in the school system represents the chief task of the supervisory staff and the best test of its service to the schools" (Elliott, New York: Vol. II, 396).

In rating teachers principals shall first of all inquire as to the degree in which rightful objectives of education are being attained (McMurry, New York: 348).

IV. TRANSLATION OF INSPECTIONAL FINDINGS INTO DIRECTION OF TEACHERS

The inspectorial function is primarily a fact-gathering function. The mass of facts should mirror the situation, but they are useless except as they are translated into the direction of practical procedure. So far as they reveal satisfactory conditions, they dictate nothing more than continuance along current lines. But unsatisfactory findings dictate changed and improved procedure. Naturally the teacher will still exercise as large an amount of self-direction as possible, and the principal will encourage such self-direction in every possible way. But the weaknesses are usually to be found where the teacher finds the interpretation of the directing science most difficult. The larger interpretative ability of the principal is thus called for. He must point out the remedial measures and make clear the ways in which the educational science dictates just those measures. Sometime he will do this in conference, sometimes by demonstrating methods or having the teacher visit and observe the demonstrations of especially competent teachers.

As principals point out to teachers weaknesses in their work they will at the same time make clear the desirable remedial measures (McMurry, New York: 350).

In presenting to teachers his inspectorial findings and in translating them into helpful advice and direction, the principal will organize and present his thought so as to make the most effective possible impression (McMurry, New York: 350-51).

The principal will often demonstrate proper methods to the weak teacher by teaching a class; and later in conference he will point out the educational justifications of methods used (Strayer, Butte: 97).

The principal will arrange to have strong teachers teach before their colleagues, with discussion afterward of principles involved (Strayer, Butte: 98).

The principal will send a teacher who needs help to observe a teacher who is good in the respect wherein help is needed, the observer to report observations and conclusions (Strayer, Butte: 98).

No more than in his original direction will the principal exercise arbitrary authority. He will know that self-translation of inspectorial findings by the teachers themselves is the better plan. His work will therefore be best performed as he acts as a leader of the teacher group in their self-interpretation and translation. He abdicates no responsibility; he is still responsible for the work. But he accomplishes it through leadership rather than through arbitrary direction. This method alone can bring continuing efficiency.

The principal is to be primarily neither inspector nor dictator, but rather an adviser to self-directing teachers (McMurry, New York: 335).

V. PARTICIPATION IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF GENERAL PLANS AND POLICIES WITHIN THE SYSTEM

On this aspect of the principal's responsibility the surveys are mostly silent. In insisting that the principal be given large powers of initiative in his building as to courses of study, methods, appliances, etc., they seem for the most part to have overlooked the fact that the things in common throughout the

work of even a diversified city are more numerous and bulk larger than those that should be locally adapted. The reports appear at least to reflect the general feeling that one in a directorial capacity should have initiative mainly in the direction of the detailed work for which he is responsible; but as he looks backward along the line to the sources of the delegated responsibility which he bears he has no inherent rights or duties of initiative. He is only to take orders, not to assist in formulating them. This attitude, however, is nowhere expressed in the surveys. On the contrary, one finds approval of the practice of appointing principals to assist in formulating courses of study, determining standards of achievement, etc.

Avenues of communication should be established which will permit principals to initiate recommendations for the consideration of their superior officers (McMurry, New York: 356).

Principals should assist in determining the particularized objectives of education (South Bend Survey: 188-90).

Principals should take part in the labors of formulating the courses of study for the school system (Van Sickle, Salt Lake City: 74).

VI. CO-OPERATION IN THE GENERAL INSPECTORIAL LABORS OF THE SYSTEM

In his directorial labors the principal is but a link in a chain; he receives directions from the more central authorities and after reduction to more specific form passes them on to the teachers. But equally in his inspectorial labors is he also a link in the line of responsibility. As he inspects procedure and results he should pass his findings on to those from whom he receives his delegated responsibility. As fully as he, they too must perform the fact-gathering function by way of looking at the achievements within the entire system just as he looks to achievements within his one building. And in large measure he must provide the facts.

This function of reporting to central authorities and of summarizing the data for the entire system is assumed in practically all of the discussions of the application of measurement to the results in the survey reports of Judd, Gray, Strayer, Courtis, Monroe, etc.

The principals of a city should co-operate in setting up objective standards of attainment which can be used as the basis of judgment of the work throughout the city (Gray, St. Louis: 185).

"The standard of one school should be constantly compared with the standards of other schools with a view to substituting definiteness of aim for indefiniteness and with a view to rendering supervision exact and impersonal." This is in part the principal's task (Judd, Cleveland: 59).

It is felt by McMurry that the principal should report inspectional findings not only as to achievements but also as to procedure employed:

The principal should make his theory of supervision clear to his superior officers by reports on the subject (McMurry, New York: 356).

VII. TRAINING PRINCIPALS IN SERVICE

Most principals have never had any systematic training for supervision. They were trained as teachers and for teaching. What the great majority of them have learned incidentally as to the technique of supervision is like most undirected incidental learning: it is fragmentary, ill proportioned, and frequently erroneous. Usually principals are more in need of training in the technique of supervision than teachers are in the technique of teaching. And it must usually be got during service, since their early training did not provide it.

For success in his work the principal needs special training in the technique of supervision (Judd, Grand Rapids: 33).

The demand that principals continue their training during service should be made very emphatic (Judd, Grand Rapids: 33).

The building principal should secure further training by means of courses in supervision and organization at summer schools (Jessup, Cleveland: 86).

Where principals are insufficiently prepared for the technical labors of scientific supervision they should be required to secure systematic training through extension classes or university summer schools; this should be encouraged by salary bonus (Strayer, Butte: 101).

The principals should be organized into study clubs to study good educational conditions elsewhere and to read carefully and discuss the half-dozen most important educational books issued each year (Cubberley, Portland: 37).

"If any principal will take a leave of absence for a year and spend it in study in a school of education in any of our better American universities, an additional \$100 a year should be added to his or her salary" (Cubberley, Portland: 65).

"They should be expected to study the educational side of their work more than they do" (special reference to Portland, Cubberley, Portland: 38).

What should they study? What abilities should they seek to develop? The answer of the surveys is very inadequate and incomplete. A few things are specified:

"The principal must know the details of all phases of the school work as well or better than do his teachers" (Cubberley, Portland: 35).

"A principal ought to be able to teach well anywhere; if he cannot, the sooner he learns the better" (Cubberley, Portland: 39).

"The principal ought to be able to take their classes from [the teachers] and teach them as well or better than they can" (Cubberley, Portland: 35).

Principals should teach four or five hours weekly, the work to be distributed according to conditions among the different rooms and subjects (Cubberley, Portland: 39).

Principals should experiment and direct experimentation by way of discovering improved means and processes (Cubberley, Salt Lake City: 45).

The character of the training needed is in some wise indicated by the nature of the principal's functions and his qualifications. Some of these have been indicated above. Here are other significant statements:

"The principal must be the instruction expert for his building" (Mirick, St. Louis: 72).

"The center of gravity of supervisory control, in so far as supervision fulfills its legitimate functions, is the principal. . . . Upon the independence, skill, and qualities of leadership of the principal depend primarily the ideals, standards, and achievements of teachers and pupils" (Elliott, New York: Vol. II, 330).

The principal should have the characteristics and abilities of the good and helpful leader: ability to develop good teachers; to advise them as to improved methods; to encourage, inspire with confidence, and fill with teaching enthusiasm (Cubberley, Portland: 35).

"Principals should be held responsible for developing a theory of supervision" (McMurry, New York: 356).

"The principal, by virtue of his position, must be a real student of instruction" (McMurry, New York: 351).

A promoted teacher of energy and good personality can easily be a successful routineer, odd-job type of principal. He may put up a good front and deceive all except those few who view his labors through the glasses of impersonal educational science. He may receive an *A* rating and yet he may be but a pseudo-principal. He can become a real principal only as he long and carefully and continuously reads the impersonal educational science and interprets it and applies it with clarified judgment to his endless series of educational problems. This alone makes the difference between the routineer and the professional. The surveyors therefore believe that study on his part is one of his prime functions.

VIII. SELECTION OF BUILDING PERSONNEL

Viewed in the abstract, it appears rather obvious that one who delegates work to subordinates for which he is himself to be held responsible should have some part in selecting those subordinates. This principle is occasionally recognized in the surveys. It seems not to be denied by any of them.

The principal should have a voice in the selection of teachers that are to be assigned to his building (Cubberley, Portland: 49).

So far as administratively possible, the principal should be permitted choice of the teachers who are to be assigned to his building (San Antonio: 182).

The school principal should have large control over the selection and work of janitors (Terman, Salt Lake City: 258).

IX. CONTROL OVER MATERIAL FACILITIES

Equally obvious is the principle that one who is responsible for work should have some proper part in the choice of the tools to be used and the physical conditions under which the work is to be done.

"The principal should be permitted to choose textbooks . . . ; supplementary books . . . ; printed helps . . . and the specific methods to be employed" (San Antonio: 182).

The principal should be a neighborhood leader and have control over the uses of his building for neighborhood purposes—within general flexible rules formulated by board and superintendent (Cubberley, Portland: 17).

Each principal should have placed at his command a small monthly appropriation for incidental expenditures to be expended at his discretion (Cubberley, Portland: 18).

X. SELECTION, PLACEMENT, TENURE, SALARY

Guiding principles in the light of which the problems of the personnel are to be solved are among the most obscure in our field. There are only a few fragmentary statements.

The strongest possible principals should be employed regardless of where they may be found (San Francisco: 231).

"All new . . . principals, when first employed, should be assigned to positions where they are most likely to succeed and grow, and for a year or two should be under the special observation of the superintendent" (Cubberley, Portland: 54).

"Positions ought not to be regarded as fixed, and a condition of healthy rivalry should be developed among principals" (Cubberley, Portland: 65).

Where the proportion of men principals is small, it should be increased (San Francisco: 231).

The tenure of principals in a school system should be made to depend upon their command over the technique of scientific supervision (Strayer, Butte: 100-101).

XI. DISTRIBUTION OF HIS LABORS

Principals' duties can be classified into three groups: (1) clerical, (2) building routine, (3) those that require the technical ability of the educational specialist. The simpler tasks in (1) and (2) should be assigned mainly to minor officials. "Then a very definite understanding should be reached that the principal shall identify himself primarily with the duties listed in group 3" (McMurry, New York: 355).

Records, reports, and many of the routine details should be taken care of by a clerk, not by principals (Mirick, St. Louis: 72).

The principal should possibly be called upon to supervise not more than thirty teachers (McMurry, New York: 355).

This practically exhausts the recommendations of the surveys that directly refer to the place and functions of the principal. Obviously many vital functions of this officer have been omitted in the discussions of the surveys. And those included have often been insufficiently defined. It is currently conceived that board and superintendent have original jurisdiction over general policies, rules, regulations, lines and methods of work, etc.; and that teachers have the task of obediently carrying out the orders centrally originated. Since the principal within such a scheme is responsible for neither the general policies and directions nor the detailed classroom labors, he becomes but an intermediary without original functions. Most of the recommendations of the surveys directly negative any such archaic theory of management. They constitute a good beginning toward a new supervisory theory.